

# ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL JOURNAL

WAR EDITION

Vol. 3.

JULY 1st, 1942.

No. 10

## RUSSIAN ALLIANCE

The news of the alliance with Russia has thrilled the followers of the United Nations and stirred the hearts of our countrymen at grips with Armageddon. Its significance for medicine is harder to assess. Since 1917 drew to its awful close, no English eye has dwelt dispassionately on the Russian scene. Stories have been told of the gigantic scale of scientific research under the ægis of the Five Years' Plan, but hitherto this library has been closed against us by the twin gates of language and high policy. To-day, the way is open.

At a wedding service the congregation would be startled if bride and groom pledged themselves for twenty years and arranged to take out a decree *nisi* after that interval had passed. But although international ethics are commonly supposed to share the principles of personal morality, the audience of a similar ceremony on the national scale hardly evinces a whisper of surprise. The fact lights up the fallacy; the conduct of international politics has no structural resemblance to personal behaviour. It would, perhaps, be impolitic to accentuate our conviction that the re-orientation of British foreign policy gleams in the same strange light which silhouetted a famous *volte-face* in Central Europe. So long as we understand that the behaviour of nations has nothing in common with the moral obligations of a Christian, we need not bother with resemblances fanciful or real. England fought Germany in 1914 because her civilisation was threatened; the threat was repeated in '39. Who prefers the English way-of-life does well by fighting to-day. He fights because he is selfish for himself and his friends—and, at long last, that is the very best reason for fighting. Selfishness is a vice which moralists read into natural behaviour. Selflessness leads to the philosophy of Gandhi, in this country to the religion of the Friends.

The identification of Russian and British interests will provide a chapter in that history of psychological epidemics which we foreshadowed on another occasion. In the correspondence column there appears a letter from

Doctor Geoffrey Bourne, in which he offers the Editor some unexpected advice. He considers that the leading article of last month is tinged with emotionalism, and that consequently its conclusions are not necessarily valid. An argument, however, may be logically correct, although it is expressed in emotional language.

His association with "Vansittart's realistic attitude that Germany has made five wars, and must be prevented from making a sixth," can claim an authoritative backing in Article IV of the new alliance which provides for common action against Germany in the post-war period should hostilities break out again. It is, therefore, hopeless to point out that the suppression which Lord Vansittart advocates can no more be expected to engender respect for democratic ideals than the rule of the Gestapo for Nazi morals. But to Doctor Bourne's charge of emotionalism we may be allowed to answer that the article which has aroused his scorn was an attempt to evaluate England's reaction to war without deference to personal bias.

These matters may seem far removed from the practice of medicine. But historical insight is the clue to perspective. Medicine in this century is fundamentally different from medicine in the age of Hippocrates. In the interval it has felt the force of the Christian impact. Whereas Hippocrates taught the healing of sickness, the Christian has asked for the healing of the sick man. On the one hand, stands the aloof, impersonal philosopher; on the other is the ready, sympathetic doctor. The old and barren argument whether medicine is an art or a science is dissolved by this picture. In the medical life of the day it is reflected in the work of the general practitioner who visits the sick man in his home, and in the calculations of the medical officer of health who foresees and attempts to check the rise of an epidemic. The two are not absolutely distinct. A famous story about Sir William Osler is a good illustration of their fundamental unity in modern medicine. He was asked by a beggar for his cloak. He gave it to him—having been given the promise of the beggar's hob-

nailed liver when he died. Sir William's was a watered charity; medicine combines a practical Christianity with a Hippocratic unconcern.

Charity, on any scale, has its audience. As in Germany under the Nazis the Winterhilfe movement was a demonstration of organised charity which won widespread acclamation, so in the Soviet Union the gospel of Karl Marx has been accorded a gigantic ovation by a community which is largely Christian. Under the Five Years' Plan the energies of those peoples have been directed into the single channel of bettering the lot of the human race. Now that Russia and Great Britain have entered on a twenty years' partnership, this movement is going to be felt even more strongly in this country. There is, therefore, the danger of overlooking some of Nature's greatest lessons in the haste of helping our fellow men.

One example must suffice. In Russia of late years ecologists have developed many lines of research on the distribution of mouse-like rodents because they are reservoirs of plague and tularæmia. But very little is

known of the other diseases which afflict these rodents and of those other more obscure factors which bring about remarkable fluctuations in their numbers. In this country, however, ecological research has been conducted on a less anthropo-centric basis, and it has reached a climax in this year with the publication of "Voles, Mice and Lemmings," by Charles Elton, the director of the Bureau of Animal Population at Oxford. For doctors it has this particular interest that it criticizes much that is commonly accepted as epidemiological knowledge and offers chances of improving that knowledge which have not hitherto been dreamt of.

So much is written and said of Russian greatness that we are inclined to overlook the things which we can offer Russia. In the medical world these may not be very many; but one of them is the suggestion that the study of human disease is only part of the great biological problem of disease and senility. In helping our fellow men, we shall do well to remember our fellow creatures.

## STUDENTS' UNION FINANCE

The following report has been sent to the Editor by the Financial Secretaries of the Students' Union:—

The financial year of the Students' Union ends in September, and it is therefore impossible to present a statement up to the present time. We can, however, make a statement of the financial position of the Students' Union ending September, 1941. During that year we have shown an excess of income over expenditure of £388 8s. 6d.; whereas the figure for the previous year was £281 8s. 4d. This margin is in no small measure due to the policy we adopted of limiting expenses as far as possible; but at the same time to grant each of the clubs a proportionate sum of money which compared very favourably with their respective peace time allotment.

We have had to meet additional expenditures in certain instances, for example, we have four places to maintain instead of two as in peace time. The JOURNAL too, which in peace time was entirely self-supporting is now run at a loss. This loss is entirely due to increased cost of publishing which has increased by over £10 per month. We decided that the JOURNAL must carry on and so as to limit the loss a small charge should be made for each copy. It should be stated that during the years the JOURNAL made a profit this was paid into the Students' Union.

The principle items of expenditure are:—

	£	s.	d.
Upkeep of Chislehurst ...	915	10	11
Expenses of Clubs ...	269	11	11
Expenses at Queens ...	269	4	6
Expenses at Hospital and Sector ...	198	7	9
Loss of JOURNAL Revenue ...	118	14	9
The total expenditure of the Students' Union is ...	1,993	15	0
The total income of the Students' Union is ...	2,406	2	1
The income is derived from Members' subscriptions ...	2,160	1	11
Investments and sundry receipts ...	246	0	2

Re expenditure, the greater part is spent to keep activities going throughout the hospital. Under present circumstances we feel sure that the excess of income over expenditure shows, for the present, a satisfactory state of affairs; but necessarily, because of fewer members entering the hospital our income will decrease. We feel, therefore, that all unnecessary expenditure should be reduced to a minimum, and this is the present policy of the Students' Union.

We would like to thank Professor Ross for the very active interest he has taken as Senior Treasurer of the Students' Union and to congratulate him on being unanimously elected President of the Students' Union. We would also like to thank Professor Wormald and Dr. Scowen for their support and untiring efforts and to congratulate Dr. Scowen on being elected Senior Treasurer.



*Would yer believe it !*

## ON HUMOUR AND WIT

By JOHN BOURKE

"Laugh and grow fat," so runs the ancient saying—a saying, truly, of some little ambiguity. Is it just a statement of a causal sequence, lamentable but true? And if so, is the meaning that if we laugh we inevitably become vast in our proportions, or that laughing is merely a short cut to rotundity? Or again, do the words perhaps convey in addition a friendly piece of advice? It is a hard saying to unriddle. But whether we have here a warning or an exhortation, it is equally hard to deny that laughing is a good thing in the sense that it would be better for us all if more of us laughed more often. I bear in mind, of course, that laughter is a noise, frequently a most unlovely and irritating one, more reminiscent of, an aviary than of a human society; a noise which, according to our powers, may range from a piercing caterwaul to what Carlyle calls a "whiffling husky cachinnation." There are, none the less, physiological as well as psychological reasons why we do and should laugh; and, in general, in these our times of strife and strain and sadness, amid the wrecking of lives and the blasting of homes and the din of "chariots hurrying near," we need the tonic of laughter all the more urgently because there is so little to bring it to us.

What are the occasions of laughter? They are many and diverse and not easily inter-related, frequently odd, sometimes obscure. We laugh when we are tickled, or under the influence of certain gasses. We laugh from nervousness or in hysteria. Some of us "laugh the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind." We laugh at a joke, at an unexpected or incongruous situation, at petty disasters to others or even to ourselves. We laugh from hostility or in derision. Sometimes we laugh when by all the rules we should weep, and weep when we should laugh—a fact, whose further investigation would, if pursued, open up the whole profound problem of a possible common source for tragedy and comedy alike.

Perhaps we may conveniently distinguish among the causes of laughter two main kinds which, without being able to separate them, we may term the "physical" and the "mental." Instances of the former kind would be the laughter of tickling and the laughter under gas, and less certainly the

laughter of nervousness and hysteria. In these there is a physical stimulus but little or no mental content; there is, we may say, a *cause* of laughter, but no *object* laughed at. Of the latter kind we have examples in the laughter of humour and the laughter of derision, where the cause of laughter appears to be the object itself that is laughed at. Now as we laugh at what is humorous far more often than we do out of hostility or derision, and as humour is our first interest here, we shall concentrate upon it. The humorous, then, is always laughable, though laughter may arise from other causes. We may note here, in passing, that we should be careful about our use of the term "laughable." For it does not follow, because I *laugh*, that I *am aware* of something laughable. As we saw, my laughter when tickled or nervous is not strictly about anything laughable; though of course it may itself in turn become laughable to a spectator, in which case I become a laughable object.

What, then, is this quality of humorousness which we have asserted to be the chief "mental" cause of laughter? I know that it is easy and fatal to dogmatise upon a matter so difficult and subtle as this and one in which variety of individual temperament and experience counts for so much; but where space is limited it is scarcely possible to avoid being dogmatic in being brief. Let us then risk the opening assertion that the essence of the humorous lies in a juxtaposition of incongruous elements that more or less violently defies an accepted and expected standard within a certain context. Some would say that this account is too wide, and would suggest incongruities that are not humorous. And they would be right, as we shall see when we come to introduce certain qualifications below. But it will do for the moment. Take a preacher in a pulpit. There is nothing necessarily humorous in such a sight. He is clad in surplice and hood, has a Bible and watch with him, and has just polished and adjusted his spectacles. In all this there is nothing humorous. Now imagine that he comes up to preach with a large sooty smear down one cheek; that he brings his pet poodle into the pulpit with him; or that in the midst of his sermon he breaks off and starts to knit. In each case an element intrudes that is incongruous and humorous, and the latter

precisely as a result of the former. Whether this particular example strikes the reader as humorous or not, matters not at all; he has only to substitute a case which does seem humorous to him, and he will find that the same test holds good.

At this point we may introduce the first of our qualifications. The incongruous element must not be of such a kind as to awaken in us fear; for fear casts out humour. If the preacher took up with him into the pulpit a pistol or a poisonous snake, and displayed them menacingly, incongruity would still be present, but humour would most probably have departed. Nor need the fear be for ourselves only. Let us suppose that the preacher slipped and sprawled in the chancel; the moment that we realised that he was hurt and in pain, any desire that we may have had to laugh would be stilled—unless, of course, we despised or hated him and laughed in hostility or derision. So that in this sense at least they are right who urge that there can be incongruities that are not humorous; these would, as incongruities, produce in the onlooker a sense of disturbance, but not one which would find relief in laughter.

Next we must ask whether a situation can be humorous in which there is no human reference. Let us think of a stream, down which there comes floating a graceful swan—followed close behind by an old boot. Clearly the boot is incongruous, while the swan is not. Does the situation gain in humorous content by the presence of the boot? It is hard to deny that it does. Yet the human reference here is not immediately obvious, apart from the fact that the boot is used by human beings as a humble article of attire. Can it perhaps be that there are some non-human objects that are in themselves humorous in some way? Is a boot in itself a funny thing? Or a sausage? Or a penguin? Or rhubarb? It might, of course, be argued that each of these involves a human reference—that a penguin is funny only because it looks like a caricature of a human being; that rhubarb is funny only because of what it does to us; and so forth. But at that rate it would scarcely be possible to think of anything which had not some human reference. Yet again, if these things were funny in themselves and intrinsically, they should be so in all relations. But they are not. A boot is not funny when it is on someone's foot; and rhubarb is not funny to look at, but only to meditate upon.

When, however, we reflect further, it seems that we cannot avoid admitting a human reference to be essential if an incongruous

element in a situation is to be pronounced humorous; and for the very good reason that such a reference seems essential if an element is to be pronounced incongruous at all. Incongruity arises in terms of and in defiance of a standard which can only be one set up by human beings. We cannot say that there is incongruity amongst inanimate objects *in themselves* (the case of the triangles is not relevant here). A prayer-book and a hot-water bottle are not intrinsically incongruous one with another. Situations could indeed be imagined into which either might enter as an incongruous element. On the other hand, we can easily envisage a situation into which both might enter and neither be incongruous. And the same holds good, I venture to think, with any imaginable group of apparently ill-assorted objects. Even if it were not so, we still have to remember that it is *we* who are perceiving or thinking of the situation and so providing an ultimate and inescapable human reference; for no situation can be perceived or even thought of save in reference to a human mind, and whether objects and situations can *exist* independently of a knowing mind is a problem for metaphysics and logic, not one for the psychology of the humorous. Finally, as we are here interested in incongruity as the basis of humour, we are not concerned with any standards that animals may make use of; in any case, save by a more or less precarious argument from analogy, we have no means of knowing what these could be.

Incongruity may take various forms. One of the commonest is exaggeration, though by no means all exaggerations are humorous, or involve incongruity in the strict sense. "Gulliver's Travels," the adventures of Baron Münchhausen and Walt Disney's cartoons are full of exaggerations that are humorous. Closely allied to exaggeration is repetition. It is well known that we may be made to laugh by the simple repetition of an object or an event not in itself humorous. There is nothing funny in my possessing two or three pairs of shoes; but what if I have sixty-one? And we all know the clown who disrobes on the stage and takes off coat after coat after coat. Two points may be noted here. (1) Neither repetition nor accumulation in itself need involve incongruity. They only do so when they continue in defiance of an accepted standard in a specific case. There is, for example, nothing incongruous or humorous in a collector of snuff-boxes or postage stamps possessing hundreds of either. (2) On the contrary, it would be incongruous and ludicrous for an avowed collector of



foreign stamps to have only four stamps in all; so that absence of repetition or accumulation can on occasion also be incongruous and humorous. This suggests that the terms "repetition" and "accumulation" in themselves involve a judgment and imply a standard.

Perhaps we may now attempt a definition. The essence of the humorous may be said to be the juxtaposition of incongruous elements but not such as to awaken the emotions of fear or pain, the incongruity in question arising either from the intrinsic quality of the elements in connection, or from their exaggeration or repetition, or from these factors combined, and in every case violating an accepted standard in the particular context. The *humourist*, then, will be a person who has a keen perception of such incongruities; and a "sense" of *humour* will be that faculty whereby he perceives them.

A word or two must be added about this prized possession, the sense of humour. Large numbers of people clearly feel it a worse insult to be accused of having no sense of humour than to be accused of having, say, no religion. Such a fearsome taunt implies at least that a sense of humour is a good thing to have. But clearly the reference here is to a very special case, namely, the ability to take in good part banter or still more serious hardship, and so make the wheels of life spin more merrily for all concerned. On the other hand, a sense of humour can be anything but a blessing, especially to those of us in whom its lamp burns dimly. Sometimes we actually couple adjectives such as "perverse" or even "devilish" with it. What, too, of April Fools' Day, and of the harmless practical joke? What of the small boy who had so much sense of humour that he laid an entirely harmless and entirely successful little booby trap for his pompous grandmother who had so little sense of humour that she could not appreciate it?

Let us now turn to the question of wit, and consider it in itself before comparing it with humour. First we notice that we have in use the three terms "wits," "wit" and "witty"; and that they do not all seem to have the same reference. The main distinction is, I think, between the plural form "wits" on the one hand, and "wit" and "witty" on the other. Tennyson's white owl who sat in the belfry "warming his five wits" was clearly cherishing his five senses. Similar is the use when we impatiently exhort someone to use their "wits," which here are almost the equivalent of "brains" or "common sense." Again, when we describe a man as "living by his wits," we mean that he makes his way in the world by

the (albeit unscrupulous) use of his brains.

Now many of our fellow men are endowed with wits in the plural without displaying any sign of wit in the singular. To be brainy and to possess common sense is not to be witty; and indeed, it is possible to be extremely witty and show a lamentable lack of common sense.

What, then, is wit, and what is it to be witty? Perhaps the first point to emphasise with regard to these terms is that, in contrast to "humour" and "humorous," they are used only of persons or their remarks. We apply the term humorous equally to a person, a remark, an event, or a complex situation. But we do not describe a situation as witty; nor do we say "Do you know, such a witty thing has just happened to me." We locate wit in persons, their remarks and ideas. We do not locate it in things, events or situations. We do not even describe a person's actions as witty, though we might so describe the ideas which prompt them. On the other hand, wit no less than, perhaps even more than, humour implies an ability to perceive connections that are subtle and unexpected. A witty remark is one in which, by a subtle and imaginative perception of the connections between ideas we express tersely in words an unexpected and piquantly satisfying association between certain ideas. Unexpectedness and, as we shall later emphasise, aptness are, no less than brevity, components of the soul of wit. But we still have not laid bare the essential distinction between wit and humour; which may now be stated as follows. Wit is not merely the ability to *perceive* connections; it is the ability to *create* them. Humour, on the other hand, is the perception of a certain connection between elements *given* in our experience. Humour largely *occurs*; wit is created. Further, wit is essentially intellectual; whereas humour (as the very expression "sense" of humour hints) is sensuous in character. Wit, then, is intellectual, creative, active, humour is sensuous, receptive, re-active. The origins of wit lie in ideas and the connections *formed* between them. The origins of humour lie, in the first instance, in connections *discovered* between elements *presented* to us in a situation, and only derivatively in ideas. This is why we do not, as we noticed above, locate wit in objects, events or situations. Wit is, furthermore, rarer than humour; and what is witty will be appreciated by fewer than what is humorous. If it is also true that wit is more intellectual than humour, then we must probably say that appreciation of wit demands higher mental qualities than appreciation of humour. We must, however, hasten to add a

caution against the assumption that the wit is a more human person than the humourist; and to point out that a higher mental quality is not necessarily the same as a nobler quality of character.

Let us now return to the subject from which we set out. We began with some remarks upon laughter; and suggested that the chief "mental" cause of laughter is awareness of the humorous in some form. Now we have to ask how wit is related to laughter. "Laugh not too much; the witty man laughs least," wrote George Herbert. Does a witty person in fact laugh much? And is laughter our normal reaction to the witty?

In discussions upon laughter there is too frequently noticeable a tendency to neglect the distinction between it and smiling, and to assume that the two are identical in nature and origin. This is clearly neither satisfactory nor true. Laughing and smiling are indeed inextricably connected, and the passage from the one to the other is easy and unpredictable. Yet they are quite distinct; and it is possible to smile without laughing, and also, with some people, to laugh without smiling. They differ, first and most obviously, in respect of their external manifestation. Smiling is visible only; laughter is audible as well. Smiling is confined to the facial muscles; laughter (even when "suppressed" and hardly audible) involves deeper muscular contraction and intermission of breathing. But they differ also in two other respects; in respect of the mental states they indicate, and in respect of their objects. (1) We find that smiling indicates mental satisfaction, approval and composure. Laughter, on the other hand, itself a disturbance, is indicative of mental disturbance; it does not indicate composure, and is felt as pleasurable only by way of relief. Consequently (2) the objects and experiences which induce smiling or laughing respectively will differ accordingly. The former will be such as to produce a felt pleasurable satisfaction in the self, and the latter such as by their inherent incongruousness to produce a mental disturbance which, though unaccompanied by fear, yet

seeks relief and finds it in laughter.

For the matter in hand, the truth seems to be that, upon the whole, we laugh at what is humorous and smile at what is witty. We laugh at jokes; but few jokes are witty. And the works of Pope or Le Rochefoucauld do not produce in us peals of laughter. The reason for this is not far to seek, if what we have said above about smiling and laughing is true. In the intellectual appreciation of a witty saying we experience a pleasurable satisfaction, that finds its normal external expression in an approving smile rather than in the profounder disturbance of a laugh. If we do not laugh at what is witty, it is because we do not *need* to. There is in wit unexpectedness, subtlety, even pungency. Yet (and this is our last remark on the subject) the core of wit, despite all else, is *not incongruity but aptness*, an aptness which, though it surprises, delights without disturbing. This element of disturbance in laughter has not, perhaps, been sufficiently emphasised. "Our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught," sang Shelley in his ode "To a Skylark"; and, though we may feel that the word "pain" is here too strong, without doubt Shelley sees deeper into the matter than those who have no feeling for "the tears of things."

But we shall do well to guard against intellectual snobbery in this sphere, as in others; for wit no less than humour has its characteristic vice. Thomas Moore wrote of Sheridan as a man:

"Whose wit in the combat, as gentle as bright,  
Ne'er carried a heart-stain away on its blade."

Now there is an instrument, called for politeness' sake a "mordant" or "caustic" wit, which is never gentle, sometimes not very bright, and always abundantly incarnadined; and the wielder of it, though in his disillusionment or smart sophistication he gain a neat little pedestal in history, may do so at the cost of becoming a far more corrosive pest to his fellow men than the most uproarious buffoon.

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#### UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

The following degree was awarded by the Vice-Chancellor on 8th May, 1942:—D.Sc. for Internal Students: CHRISTIE, Ronald Victor, St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School.

## NAVAL CORRESPONDENCE

*After breakfast*

Say Doc., what time do you open the sick bay? Oh, about 9 o'clock. You'll be still around until 10.30, or thereabouts? No, shut at five past, you ought to know that, it's an old naval custom. Well, where can I find you? Maybe up at Hill Farm, Kitty has sprained her knee. That's news, who's Kitty? The old mare. Damn, thought I was the first to discover the name of your latest girl friend. No such luck, of course I may be out with Sally, although she has got worms rather badly. How awful, poor thing. I think I'll give her a dose of arsenic. My God, be careful, you know you always say you've forgotten the dose of every drug except aspirin. Oh, that's alright, it's a drug put up by Bayers, especially for cats. Another girl friend? No, just a bitch. You mean a dog. Yes, the dog's a bitch. Not a cat? Forget it. But why use arsenic, I thought areca nut was used for worms. This is better, it paralyses the worms. Would gin do? It's an idea, certainly. What happens to the worms? The dog may pass them, or they may lie in the rectum, in which case the dog is given a wash out. An enema? Yes, there is a soft rubber catheter somewhere in the sick bay, I'll have to ask Sickie to find it. Don't you know where it is? Hang it all, I've only had one patient in the last six weeks, anyway, it's his job. True, very true, it must be dull for you. Not at all, after nearly two years in the navy one becomes an artist at successfully doing nothing. So I've noticed, but what about the enema? Are you going to use one of those pump things which one sees in the side window at a chemist's? No, a douche-can would be better. I can always borrow one from a friend of mine. Are you as friendly as that? It's alright, she's married. You're as mad as the last Quack we had here, he was a Bart.'s man as well. T—P—? Yes. Ah, but his craziness was only superficial. Tell me, were you mad before you joined up? Mother never said so. Hell, it's nearly 9.30, I must be off. Hope you enjoy the gas-mask practice. Hi! wait a sec. If you're wanted what shall I say you're doing? Scraping pigs at the slaughter house—Cheerio! That fellow is mad—must be!

*After lunch*

Where are you going, Fakir? Hunting! What *cherchez la femme*? No, rabbits—they always chase me. The rabbits? No women. Conceited oaf. I'll be on the Downs, beyond

the quarry at Hazel Lane. How the devil can we get hold of you if a M.A.S.B. brings in a wounded fighter pilot or something? I'll be here as usual. Sheer luck on your part. No, I'm psychic. Tripe. Damn it, Doc., that reminds me, why do we have to eat roast beef twice a day, day in, day out, week after week? I'm only the mess secretary, not the mess caterer. Can't you sign a certificate to say that beef is bad for our health? No need for you to eat beef if you don't like it, you're two stone over weight, in any case gin is quite a good food when you're used to it. That's all very well, Doc., but you're never in to dinner, and live on the fat of the land—rabbits and blackberries—while we have the old drowned cabbage and slushy potatoes. It really is too bad, Doc., you've got to do something. Suppose I catch a rabbit. You could give it to the mess. No fear, it's worth a bob at least. As mess secretary, give yourself 1/3 for it. The mess can afford to pay more. No, it can't, P—— always said we had not any money. A mere slip of the tongue, what he really meant was that he hadn't the faintest idea. Actually we have over £30 in the bank. I'll bid 2/6 for the rabbit, when I've caught it. How did you get all that money? By carrying P——'s methods to a logical conclusion—I just write two or three nasty letters to ex-members of the mess and they send me a few pounds conscience money—it's easy. Cheerio! That fellow can't be as mad as I thought.

*After breakfast*

What are your plans this morning, Doc.? I think I shall shoot a few gulls. What with? My revolver. You'll never hit 'em. I should hate to. You know, you're only allowed six practice shots a year, don't you. Only six!!! I can't believe it, it's fantastic, it's ridiculous, it's absurd, it's—I give it up. Why, we might be invaded at any moment. Never mind, we've got a Lewis gun and you've the Hague Convention. Never heard of it—if I meet any Huns I'll shoot 'em. What with? Well, I can always throw stones—but seriously, are you sure I'm only allowed six shots. Yes, and every empty has to be accounted for in quintuplicate. That is tiresome, I've already fired 20 rounds. But you signed for them. Well? The Captain will want to see you if he finds out. That would be more than tiresome, a bit awkward, in fact. What did you do with the empties. Threw 'em at the gulls. Holy smoke, do you have to commit two crimes?



Well, how was I to know, it seemed common sense to practice a bit. Now, Doc., how long have you been in the navy? 22 months. Haven't you realised that it is your duty to read and obey the K.R.A.I. and not to use your common sense unless instructed to do so. Apparently not, must be a congenital defect. A what? Skip it. You had better go and see that patient. What patient? A fellow from a trawler has been waiting to see you for the last half hour. Probably got toothache, still I'd better do my duty to-day.

Good-morning, Sicky. Good-morning, sir.

I hear we have a patient. Yes, sir, a man complaining of cold feet. Tell him to change his socks and wear thicker ones. Is that what you call a bit of Georgie G.'s advice? Exactly, just common sense. Oh, by the way, Sicky, can you get me any .45 ammunition? I'll try, sir, how much do you want? About two dozen rounds. Yes, sir. That's all this morning, I suppose, tell that trawler bloke to wash his feet before he changes his socks. Exit.

Yours truly,

SURG. LT.

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### At HILL END

The function of a correspondent is to report anything out of the ordinary that takes place. Therefore, although the purpose of this column may be to reassure its readers of the continued existence of this hospital, this cannot be its whole task since it is optimistically headed "Hill End News"—a headline of which it is all too often unworthy. Further, on glancing at some of its predecessors, I find that the only thing that it reports with any consistency is the absence of news, followed by the inevitable apology and sometimes garnished with a joke at the end that is always, and inevitably, in the best possible taste. This month I have tried to be original by starting off with the apology, and even with the joke.

But several things have happened during the last month that are real news. The Abernethian Society has emerged from its past state of inactivity and has held two meetings at Hill End. At the first of these, questions on the teaching and curriculum here were fired at a "Brains Trust," which consisted of the professors of Medicine, Surgery, and Bacteriology. The meeting was opened by short addresses by these three in turn, followed by summaries of the first year of clinical work at two other London Hospitals. These started the ball rolling, and it continued to do so for about an hour afterwards. The keenness of the discussion can be gauged from the fact that nine o'clock lectures were suggested, and were not immediately shouted down. It was a very satisfactory evening. Their second meeting, which was equally well attended, was of the nature of a "clinical evening," when certain

cases were discussed, and the Electro-cardiogram was demonstrated. Dr. Geoffrey Bourne opened this meeting, and made an excellent chairman.

Such intellectual meetings do not mean that cricket is being disregarded. I am given to understand that it would not be advantageous to publish any results of matches at the moment (the secretary went out muttering something about morale that I did not catch), but if the aftermath of the Harpenden match was anything to go by, the afternoon, or evening, was greatly enjoyed. I need hardly say that on this occasion the weather was extremely hot, and the fielding arduous.

Owing to the fact that the grass courts are still not in action, the tennis players have not been having such a riotous time, but a considerable number of people play on the hard court.

I notice, or rather it was pointed out to me, that I have made no mention of the Gramophone Concerts that take place every Sunday evening. The attendance at these has been steadily increasing, and although it is usually unwise to give any opinion about music in public, I think that I can safely say that the concerts recently have been of a very high standard. This is one of the activities that continues steadily, and is usually covered by the sentence, "there is no news."

At an election for the Hill End Barts Club held recently, H. E. Claremont and J. L. G. Thomson were elected on to the Committee.

Apart from this activity, there is nothing to report since our last bulletin.

## CORRESPONDENCE

*To the Editor, St. Bartholomew's Hospital Journal*

Dear Sir,

It is interesting to find in your leading article the physical signs of the disease against which it inveighs—but your diagnosis is, I believe, wrong. It is emotionalism which has clouded all the political issues with the smoke screen of distortion and obscurity. We must detach facts from the adherent masses of wishful thinking, environmental influence, and so far as human beings can of all the clogging effects of thalamism.

The facts, or a few of them, are, I believe, as follows:—

Germany made five aggressive wars in 100 years.

Churchill was the only public man who in contemporary literature and speech foretold this present one with accuracy and by a rational approach to the problem.

However delightful individual Germans may have been, they have marched under Frederick the Great, Bismarck, Kaiser Wilhelm and his Junkers, Hitler and his Nazis.

The causes of these wars have been partly economic, partly sociological. There is no guarantee that Germany in 25 years will not attempt a sixth war of aggression.

As yet no political system has prevented a country from making war, for its own purposes of power politics; empires, democracies, communistic states and totalitarian states have all done this.

Democracies have, historically, been found slower to propel into war. Therefore, until some system of

world-control can be established it would seem that it would be wise to see that after this war the democracies shall be as strong and as identical in purpose, politically, as possible.

Gollancz's therapeutic suggestion of world socialism would take possibly 100 years to introduce, and is thus no answer to Vansittart's realistic attitude that Germany has made five wars and must be prevented from making a sixth.

The political re-education of the present young Nazis will take longer than 25 years, which appears to be about the present length of Germany's war cycle.

I invite you, and those of your readers who have a respect for the scientific method, to search your minds for the seeds of thalamism and to try not only to isolate facts from feelings, but to separate different facts, one from another, before passing judgment upon them.

There is no place for emotion in the technique of thinking. Inability to recognise this is, in my opinion, the reason for the miserable state of present politics, and of the ineptitude shown by most politicians.

I apologise for the length of this, but hope for a therapeutic result.

I am, yours sincerely,

GEOFFREY BOURNE.

47, Queen Anne Street,

Cavendish Square, W.1.

June 9th, 1942.

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### At CAMBRIDGE

"Do you always identify arteries by cutting them across to see if they've got a lumen?"

"That's the vertebral artery; found in leg in two per cent. of cases."

"Big stuff . . . go on!"

"Well, what did he say to you?"

"I was advised to read the Lancet and the B.M.J."

"Rosen, vat do you pay for your digs?"...

"Oh, my dear, I simply must have a cigarette. . . ."

"Dammit, I've only got one!"

"Well, I only want one!"

"You're sure to find him in the Bun Shop . . . ."

"There's a jolly interesting lecture on Colourless Flagellata to-night."

"Oh, good egg!"

"Well, after we left the Baron . . . ."

"Have we a 'Demmo.' now, or is it 'Biochemmy'?"

"Good Lord, do you still read the Boy's Own Paper?"

"What fun! I'm on Guard to-night!"

"I hear the Boat Club are racing Girton."

"How much start are they getting?"

"Have they made him a Lance-Corporal yet?"

"Don't be offensive, he's quite a nice chap!"

"My God, what a viva . . . ."

"People seem to be awfully small around here—I can never find a white coat to fit me."

"And she left me later in the evening."

"Sic transit Gloria, eh?"

"Yes; ab Leonem ad Regem."

"This is too much—I'm baling out!"

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## DRAINAGE TUBES

By T. A. GRIMSON

Where a drainage tube is to remain *in situ* for short periods only, fixation by suture is obviously the method of choice. However, when a tube has to be left in the abdominal cavity for an indefinite period, following an operation such as choledochostomy or drainage of an appendix abscess, the stitch must be cut when it is either shortened or turned to prevent the formation of a faecal fistula. This means that some other form of fixation is necessary.

The general practice at present is to transfix the tube with a safety pin, and secure the ends of the pin to the skin adjacent to the operation wound with adhesive tape. This prevents the tube from either falling into, or being extruded from the cavity which it is draining. The disadvantages of this method are obvious; they are:—

1. The possibility of infecting the operation wound with the adhesive tape, which does not lend itself to adequate sterilisation.
2. The adhesive tape must be removed to manipulate the tube; this causes the patient unnecessary discomfort.
3. Manipulation of adhesive tape with two pairs of forceps is a difficult procedure.
4. There is often difficulty in applying adhesive tape to skin that is sodden with discharge.

These disadvantages can be overcome by threading a length of sterile household tape through each end of the safety pin, and then applying the dressing in the usual manner. A

piece of adhesive tape is rubbed with cotton wool at its midpoint, so that about half an inch of the adhesive surface is destroyed. It is then affixed to the abdominal wall, well away from the skin incision in the shape of a V. The apex of the V, formed by the non-adhesive central portion of the tape, makes a free loop which should be pointing towards, and level with, the pin transfixing the tube. The tape should then be threaded through the loop and firmly tied with the hands. The procedure is then repeated on the other side of the skin incision; it involves no breach of aseptic technique.

Should it be necessary to manipulate the tube at a subsequent dressing it should be remembered that the outer part of the tape, where it has been fastened with the hands, is unsterile. The tape should therefore be cut near the pin, and the outer part removed with the dirty dressing forceps which are used to remove the old dressing.

This method has been tried, and has been found to be satisfactory. The first case on which it was used was a patient whose tube had been secured with adhesive tape only on two previous occasions. After the method described above had been used the patient volunteered the information that the dressing was a more comfortable and less painful procedure than it was formerly. This method of fixation can obviously be used in any part of the body where a drainage tube is retained for long periods.

## MODUS OPERANDI

*The Solution:—*

Of tools and the surgeon I sing: *i.e.*, there's life to be seen and lots to be learned even at an operation. For instance, the way the Sister painted the belly with iodine to ward off evil spirits and hid the surgeon's tell-tale nose in a mask deserves the highest praise. But the rift in the lute was the surgeon. He was a terror. He opened the belly, peeped inside, pulled out the appendix, and shouted, "Quis?" "Ego!" shouted the Sister, and caught it on a platter. He then let his scalpel slip, and it spoiled one of those pipe affairs. . . . "Ugh!" he grunted, and asked, "What should A do now?" "Aorta be more careful," I replied with apt wit.

Then he lost his favourite gadget (?), so he iodined and opened the belly. He found several swabs, both sister's dental plates, but no sign of the gadget. We hunted everywhere. Sister slipped on a piece of soap and tumbled right under the piano. Then the surgeon arose from all fours and caught his titter (?) on the fly-paper. We did laugh. The noise roused the anaesthetist from his stupor. He arose, and —lo and behold!—the gadget clattered to the floor. "Oh, you little rogue," cried the surgeon with a merry laugh, "you meant to pawn it, I wouldn't mind betting." But the anaesthetist had gone. Personally I wouldn't mind betting he wishes he had joined the M.D.U.

OPERATING ROOM PROCEDURES FOR NURSES, by Jean D. Jolly, S.R.N., S.C.M., D.N. (Faber & Faber, 4s.)

This is a compact and extremely comprehensive book, which should prove invaluable to nurses who hope to work in the Operating Theatre in the future, as well as being of great interest to those already doing theatre work.

The writer must have had very wide experience in all branches of theatre work, and her book is full of practical hints, as in the chapter on surgical lotions, where she adds when discussing iodine as an antiseptic, "An iodine stain can be removed by immediate use of carbolic lotion, 1 in 40." Most textbooks tend to be written from a more detached point of view than this one, and it is a relief to find a writer with such an obvious practical understanding of her subject.

There is bound to be a divergence of opinion on some points mentioned in a book such as this, as, for example, her method of "scrubbing up" and her reference to "Industrial spirit as a chemical sterilising agent," but one must remember that this book was first written in 1936—and all methods change with the times.

The list of instruments is concise and very well constructed, although the small space devoted to thoracic surgery and plastic surgery may prove a disappointment—as also may the absence of the operation for retinal detachment. It might have been helpful to include a description of the handling of an unconscious patient and the various positions adopted on the operating table, but these may all be filled in by the nurse or student in the section for notes.

It is most certainly a book that all nurses (and medical students) would find most useful.

MATERIA MEDICA FOR NURSES, by A. Muir Crawford, M.D. Fifth Edition. (H. K. Lewis, 4s. 6d.)

This book presents a concise summary of drugs and their uses. Its material is well arranged and trained nurses will find it a convenient reference, while it will prove invaluable to those still in training.

RECENT ADVANCES IN MEDICINE, by G. E. Beaumont and E. C. Dodds, Tenth Edition. (J. and A. Churchill, Limited, 18s.)

The distinguished authors of this popular summary have brought it up to date with lucid descriptions of the main advances in medicine since the outbreak of war.

The opening chapter deals with the sulphonamide drugs in current use. The authors have wisely included a list of the proprietary names of several of these drugs which they append to a brief, chemical exposition of their nature. The clinical applications are emphasised and a satisfactory dosage table is suggested for each drug.

In the chapter on vitamins, the position of the vitamin B complex has been reviewed and the anti-neuritic and pellagra-preventing factors are considered in some detail. Recent work on vitamins E, K and P has also been included.

The ever-widening field of biochemical penetration into the fastnesses of clinical medicine is underlined by the interesting chapters on renal and hepatic function and the blood and urine chemistry, on glycosuria due to various causes and on the investigation of gastric function. This last chapter answers, as well, the medical and surgical treatment of hæmatemesis, the prognosis of which has improved so much with the clinical experiments of Meulengracht on the Continent and of Witt's over here.

The application of physics to medicine is seen in the accounts of clinical electrocardiography and electro-encephalography. This last is followed by a description of combined cisternal and lumbar puncture and of the chemical findings in the cerebro-spinal fluid in spinal cord compression.

The anæmias are discussed concisely, and a section on the erythrocyte sedimentation rate weighs up the value of this test. Finally there are chapters on pneumothorax and sex hormones which reflect the clinical debt to physiology, and two chapters from the field on diphtheria and scarlet fever which outline the great progress in epidemiology.

## ON ACTIVE SERVICE

M. M. Posel, S.A.M.C.

### BIRTHS

GRAHAM.—On April 26th, 1942, at Lansdown Nursing Home, Blundellsands, to Ann (née Russell), wife of F./Lt. G. D. Graham, R.A.F.V.R.—a son.

PIRIE.—On April 12th, 1942, at Sutherland Lodge, Baddow Road, Chelmsford, to Margaret (née Richford), wife of Dr. Harold Pirie—a son and daughter.

HARRISON.—On June 7th, 1942, at King's Lynn, to Mary (née Bowen), wife of John O. Harrison, F.R.C.S.—a son.

BEILBY.—On May 20th, 1942, at the Shiel Nursing Home, Weybridge, to Katharine (née Cunliffe-Owen), wife of Dr. F. J. Beilby, West Byfleet—a son.

DUNN.—On May 20th, 1942, at Miss McCabe's Nursing Home, Londonderry, Northern Ireland, to Diana (née Aitken), wife of Dr. G. Newton Dunn, of Kincardine, Salisbury—a daughter.

HADFIELD.—On May 28th, 1942, to Jean (MacDougall of MacDougall) and Stephen Hadfield, of Beer, Devon—a daughter.

NAIRAC.—On May 20th, 1942, to Barbara, wife of Dr. M. L. Nairac, Kidderminster—a daughter.

POOLMAN.—On May 19th, 1942, at Bendarroch, Ottery St. Mary, Devon, to Peter (née Lock), wife of Lieut. John Poolman, R.A.M.C.—a son.

PRATT.—On May 7th, 1942, at St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, to Vera Campbell, wife of Dr. John S. Pratt—a daughter.

## MARRIAGES

BOYLE—TALLACK.—On May 2nd, 1942, at St. Nicholas' Church, Chislehurst, by the Rev. J. R. Lumb, M.A., Lieut. Archibald Cobbourn Boyle, R.A.M.C., only son of the late A. H. Boyle and Mrs. Boyle, of Bickley, to Patricia Evelyn Tallack, youngest child of Mr. and Mrs. F. H. C. Tallack, of Chislehurst.

EVANS—FOORD.—On May 8th, 1942, at Speldhurst, Kent, Gwilym Rhys Evans, Lieut., R.A.M.C., youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. H. T. Evans, of Aberayron, Cardiganshire, to Jean Marjorie, second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. Q. Foord, of Speldhurst, Kent.

### DEATHS

CHAFFEY.—On May 8th, 1942, suddenly, at 110, The Drive, Hove, Wayland Charles Chaffey, M.D. (Lond.), F.R.C.P., aged 86 years.

LEGGATT.—On April 23rd, 1942, Gerard Stedman Leggatt, M.R.C.S., beloved husband of Alice Leggatt, of 37, Gwydyr Mansions, Hove, and dearly loved father of Aileen Stafford.

### MISSING O.A.S.

BARBER.—Reported missing, Singapore, Captain A. Barber, M.D., R.A.M.C., 197 Field Ambulance.

GRANT.—Officially reported missing Malaya/Singapore, Captain W. Russell Grant, R.A.M.C., attached R.A.S.C., 18th Division.

SYRED.—Reported missing Java Seas battle, March 1st, 1942, Surg.-Lt. Deryck Ralph Syred, R.N.V.R., H.M.S. Encounter.